

In their book, *They Say, I Say* (2010/2017), Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein encourage novice academic writers to make use of templates to frame their arguments. They argue that experienced academic writers make two central rhetorical “moves.” First, writers summarize what *others* have said (“they say”); then they pose their *own* argument in response to what others say (“I say”). Arguments either agree, agree with a difference, or disagree with other arguments. Also stressed in the book is the importance of acknowledging the other side of the argument (objectors or naysayers). In this handout, which reproduces some of Graff and Birkenstein’s templates, X, Y, and Z stand in for authors’ names. As you will see, their language is informal, specific, and personal, so we suggest you adapt their demonstrations of rhetorical moves to suit your purpose.

## Describing an article or book you’ve read (introducing what “they say”)

- A number of \_\_\_\_ have recently suggested that \_\_\_\_.
- It has become common today to dismiss \_\_\_\_\_.
- In their recent work, Y and Z have offered harsh critiques of \_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_.

## Introducing standard views

- The standard way of thinking about topic X has it that \_\_\_\_\_.
- It is often said that \_\_\_\_\_.
- Many people assume that \_\_\_\_\_.

## Introducing an ongoing debate

- In discussions of X, one controversial issue has been \_\_\_\_\_. On the one hand, \_\_\_\_\_ argues \_\_\_\_\_. On the other hand, \_\_\_\_\_ contends \_\_\_\_\_. Others even maintain \_\_\_\_\_. My own view is \_\_\_\_\_.

## Using verbs that capture authorial action

- X acknowledges / argues / believes/ denies / does not deny / claims / complains / concedes / demonstrates / emphasizes / insists / observes / reminds us / suggests that

## Introducing quotations

- X states, “\_\_\_\_\_.”
- As the prominent philosopher X puts it, “\_\_\_\_\_.”
- According to X, “\_\_\_\_\_.”
- In her book, \_\_\_\_\_, X maintains that “\_\_\_\_\_.”
- In X’s view, “\_\_\_\_\_.”
- X disagrees when he writes, “\_\_\_\_\_.”

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The above templates are from or adapted from *They Say, I Say* by Graff and Birkenstein, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, pp. 293-303, published 2017 by W.W. Norton Company, New York, New York. Reproduced/ adapted by Madeline Walker, 2019, The CAC, University of Victoria. This copy is made solely for the use by a student, staff, or faculty member for private study. Any other use may be an infringement of copyright if done without securing the permission of the copyright owner.

### Explaining quotations

- In other words, X believes \_\_\_\_\_.
- In making this comment, X urges us to \_\_\_\_\_.
- X's point is that \_\_\_\_\_.
- The essence of X's argument is that \_\_\_\_\_.

### Signaling who is saying what

- X argues \_\_\_\_\_.
- According to both X and Y, \_\_\_\_\_.
- Politicians \_\_\_\_\_, X argues, should \_\_\_\_\_.
- My own view, however, is that \_\_\_\_\_.
- Indeed, it is highly likely that \_\_\_\_\_.

### Disagreeing with reasons ("I say")

- I think X is mistaken because she overlooks \_\_\_\_\_.
- X's claim that \_\_\_\_\_ rests upon the questionable assumption that \_\_\_\_\_.
- By focusing on \_\_\_\_\_, X overlooks the deeper problem of \_\_\_\_\_.

### Agreeing with a difference ("I say")

- I agree that \_\_\_\_\_ because my experience \_\_\_\_\_ confirms it.
- X surely is right about \_\_\_\_\_ because, as she may not be aware, recent studies have shown that \_\_\_\_\_.
- X's theory of \_\_\_\_\_ is extremely useful because it sheds insight on the difficult problem of \_\_\_\_\_.

### Agreeing and disagreeing simultaneously ("I say")

- Although I agree with X up to a point, I cannot accept his overall conclusion that \_\_\_\_\_.
- Though I concede that \_\_\_\_\_, I still insist that \_\_\_\_\_.
- X is right that \_\_\_\_\_, but she seems on more dubious ground when she claims that \_\_\_\_\_.

### Acknowledging the naysayers

- Yet some readers may challenge the view that \_\_\_\_\_.
- Of course, many will probably disagree with this assertion that \_\_\_\_\_.

### Describing why your research is important

- X matters / is important because \_\_\_\_\_.
- These findings have important consequences for the broader domain of \_\_\_\_\_.
- These conclusions / This discovery will have significant applications in \_\_\_\_\_ as well as \_\_\_\_\_.

For more information, see the book *They Say, I Say* available in the McPherson library on reserve and at the bookstore.